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Great buns

By **MARK LEAN**

Gourmet burgers have landed in Kuala Lumpur, and can be found at Relish, the latest addition to the many upscale eateries in Changkat Bukit Bintang.

Relish

22, Changkat Bukit Bintang,

50200 Kuala Lumpur

Tel: 03-2145 3321

Opening hours: Sunday – Thursday (Noon till midnight); Friday and Saturday (Noon to 1am)

Pork-free

It's huge," exclaimed my slightly surprised-looking dining companion, a girl who is usually known for her predilection towards all things large, lean and hunky.

Yep, the 25oz Aussie Burger at Relish is larger than life. In fact, it's the burgers that are the stars at Changkat Bukit Bintang's latest eatery with its all-white interior, a place offering stylish and casual all-day dining.



Big bites: Aussie Burger served at Relish does require some skill to consume. — PICTURES BY MARK LEAN

Here, you may take your pick of burgers in all guises – whether in beef, chicken or vegetarian incarnations. And while more conservative folk might balk at spending RM25 or more on something that they assume doesn't cost much to make, the burgers at Relish make a simple point: you pay for what you get.

This includes a Rambo-sized 2½-inch thick burger (you have a choice of the 6oz. or the 12oz variety, priced RM24++ and RM31++) with the whole works: beetroot, pineapple, homemade tomato relish, smoked bacon, salad and an egg served sunny side up.



"I figured it would be a novel idea to introduce the gourmet burger to KL," says Relish's owner Daniel Stuart. "Initially, we didn't know how it would be received but response has been very, very good."

This, of course, isn't surprising. The meat is well cooked yet has that elusive melt-in-your-mouth taste and there is none of the stringy, rubbery patties that pass off as burgers at other restaurants. Grab a side order of potato

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Spicy goodie: Chicken Indian has spicy chicken slices in bun with papadums

wedges (RM8) and French fries (RM5) and you'll have your own little version of heaven, hamburger-style.

Enjoying burgers often remind us of our growing up years: less complicated times when hanging out post-school at a certain yellow-arched burger chain outlet was what we loved to do.

In some ways, Relish has recreated that old school feeling, while also being funkier and brasher: a place for

grown-ups to relax at after work.

What better way to end a long day than by grabbing a burger?

"We've created different types of burgers including a Chicken Indian (medium and large; price RM19++ and RM25++), which is essentially, spicy chicken slices in bun with *papadum* on top," explains Stuart, who incidentally relocated to Malaysia from London about eight months ago. "It's one of our top sellers, besides the Aussie Burger."

Certainly, the gourmet burger is not an entirely novel concept, having become a major fixture on the menus of cafes around the world. However, its appearance in KL is relatively new. And judging by how busy Relish is on some days, it looks like deluxe burgers are here to stay.

Other thoroughly multi-cultural items on the menu include the Mediterranean-type starters: Tapenade (minced black olives and garlic) with grilled pita, and the Turkish Imam Biyaldi, or sautéed eggplant, tomato, onion, olive oil and garlic, with good old wantan prawns accompanied with tangy chilli relish.

Stuart has also devised the yummy Lamb Minty (medium and large at RM20++ and RM27++), an upmarket version of the main attraction at late night kebab shops in the United Kingdom.



Freshen up: Lamb Minty is the upmarket version of kebab.

The Relish version features warm, fluffy pita, bite-sized portions of lamb in a specially created light-as-air mint dressing, onions, lettuce and tomato. The dish is every healthy eater's dream, unlike the kebab shop offering which literally wades in grease.

"The Lamb Minty is what we consider a great classic that has been given a dose of the new; something that goes down well after a night of partying," says Stuart.

Interestingly, Relish's location opposite Frangipani Bar and Restaurant, which is extremely popular with the KL's hip set, makes for a good spot for brunch. The folk who live in the area often trundle down from their condominiums to polish off a Lamb Minty or two after a night on the town.



Hot seats: The warm interior of Relish is a great incentive for its patrons to enjoy the food even more.

In fact, you are bound to see a few familiar faces wanting to appear incognito in their wraparound shades, looking sheepish, and nursing a hangover from hell.

But thanks to the good people at Relish, things start to become a bit normal again after a rather strong Bloody Mary, which the well-trained bartender is fast gaining a reputation for. Here, the drinks, like the burgers, do not come in half measures.

It's the same with the brisk, friendly service, which stays consistent no matter how busy the restaurant gets – a near-to-mighty feat in KL.

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